



*News From*

# **Maggie Brooks**

## *Monroe County Executive*

**For Immediate Release**  
Wednesday, May 13, 2009

### **2009 State of the County Address** **Monroe County Executive Maggie Brooks** **Wednesday, May 13, 2009 – 7:00 P.M.**

Thank you, and good evening.

Before I begin, I would like to honor the brave servicemen and women of our armed forces. In a world filled with uncertainty and great challenge, they stand as steadfast protectors of freedom and hope. We must all give thanks to these dedicated citizens who sacrifice so much to serve this nation and safeguard our ability to live in a free and democratic society.

Please join me in recognizing the following Monroe County employees who have served in Iraq or Afghanistan over the course of the past year. They are:

Jeffrey Boyer, Michael Chambry, Nathan Clarke, Mark Duris, Dale Fair, Robert Farina, Seth Hoffer, Scott Peters, Dean Tuthill, Roseann Werner, and Shane Yeager.

Thank you.

President Zyra, Majority Leader Quatro, Minority Leader Bronson, Sheriff O'Flynn, County Clerk Dinolfo, Mayor Duffy, Chairman Reilich, Chairman Cook, Chairman Corryn, distinguished guests, friends, and fellow taxpayers...

It has been said that knowledge of the past is a key to understanding the present and the future.

The year was 1900. The month was October. An energetic, Amherst-educated minister by the name of Benjamin Rush Rhees was sworn-in as president of a small Baptist-sponsored college right here in Rochester, NY. The institution had been founded in 1850 by the Baptist Education Society to offer greater opportunities in faith-based higher education for young people in our area.

At the turn of the century, the institution remained a small college located on an 8 acre campus where University Avenue is today.

The tenure of President Rhees was a period of expansive growth, due in large part to an innovative new partnership with famed entrepreneur and Eastman Kodak founder George Eastman.

The infusion of Eastman's philanthropic donations coupled with Rhees' ambitious vision launched the institution's transformation from college to full-fledged university. Between 1900

and 1930, the University added a school of music, a school of medicine and dentistry, an institute of optics, a medical research center, and even broke ground on a beautiful, spacious new campus on the banks of the Genesee River. All this was done in a period far more challenging than our own, which saw the First World War and the greatest economic freefall in our nation's history.

And that beautiful new campus, the very ground upon which we stand tonight, was completed in 1930, at the height of our nation's Great Depression.

Today that institution, the University of Rochester, has an educational reputation that is world-renowned. And, the U of R has grown to become our community's largest employer and an integral part of Monroe County's high quality of life and vibrant economy.

Leading the way in the fields of bio-technology, medicine, and optics, performing cutting-edge research every day, the 19-thousand people who work here are changing our world for the better.

To President Joel Seligman – thank you for your visionary leadership. I truly appreciate the strong support you continue to provide to Monroe County.

To U of R students, faculty and staff – thank you for putting Rochester on the map. And thank you also for your kind hospitality this evening.

This is my 6<sup>th</sup> State of the County address, and it comes at a time when individuals and families all across this great nation are struggling. The mettle of taxpayers throughout New York State is being tested. And counties, especially Upstate counties, are under tremendous financial pressure.

The State of our County is very much tied to the economic storm raining down on Albany and Washington. But the resolve of our community has been tested before, and with each challenge the great spirit of our people has prevailed. With each challenge, we have identified our assets, focused on our resources, and turned our strengths into opportunities for the future.

Today, Monroe County knows that successful businesses that create jobs are the key to a strong and vibrant future. In the 1980s manufacturing based economy, there were 330-thousand jobs in this community. In our 2009 knowledge based economy, there are 375-thousand jobs. 97 per cent of our job growth is in small to mid-sized high tech industries such as health care, optics, bio-medical, telecommunications and alternative energy. 5-thousand companies in our area have fewer than 100 workers.

Since this time last year, Monroe County has helped 141 companies grow. That support will result in the investment of more than 308 million dollars in our local economy. 1,870 new jobs will be created over the next three years and 7,088 jobs will remain in our community.

Our ability to remain competitive depends on continued economic diversity. But our future also depends on stability.

Monroe County is currently home to more than 50 local companies who have been in business in our community for over 100 years. These companies are a testament to the strength and

resilience of the local economy, no matter what the national trends. These companies represent the remarkable commitment of generations of families to this region.

How many of you have ever received a gift from Tiffany's or Neiman Marcus? Did you notice the wrapping tissue inside the box? The tissue is made right here in Rochester at Flower City Tissue Mills, a company founded in 1906 by William Shafer, Sr.

The company's original product line was simple, white wrapping and white anti-tarnish tissue paper. Over the course of its 100 years in business, the company has expanded its production to include tissue paper in 72 different colors, and over 100 custom prints.

Flower City Tissue Mills is now a fourth generation family company, with William Shafer IV employed as the Vice President of Marketing. He is here with us tonight, so please join me in thanking Mr. Shafer and Flower City Tissue Mills for their continued confidence in the Rochester economy over the last century.

Seabreeze Amusement Park has been entertaining generations of local families for more than 125 years. Seabreeze opened in 1879 as a park and picnic area on the last stop of the steam railroad line. By 1900 the Long Family, widely known as the 'Carousel Concessionaires,' began introducing mechanical rides to enthusiastic crowds.

Since then, five generations of the Long family have worked to turn Seabreeze into one of the greatest family-owned amusement parks in the nation. Today, Seabreeze is the 4<sup>th</sup> oldest operating amusement park in the country and each season over 300-thousand guests come to enjoy its more than 70 attractions.

The park has created wonderful memories for millions of children and adults, including this County Executive, and still helps define our great quality of life after 130 successful years.

Seabreeze President Rob Norris is here this evening. I would like to thank Rob and the Long family for their many contributions to our community.

Palmer Food Services has been serving its Western New York customers and clients with high quality seafood, meat, poultry, and groceries for 159 years. Founded in 1850 by Levi Palmer, Palmer Food Services is Rochester's oldest family-owned business.

Palmer's is primarily a wholesale food distributor, but recently expanded their operations and opened a 'direct to you' market where the freshest varieties of prepared and unprepared seafood and meats are available to dine-in or take-out.

Palmer's employs nearly 200 people in our community and 50 of these jobs have been created since October, 2008. While many companies are experiencing downsizing and lay-offs, Palmer's is expanding its operations and providing quality jobs for area residents.

Kip Palmer is the 5<sup>th</sup> generation President and Owner of Palmer Food Services, and he is with us here tonight. Thank you, Kip, for your family's long-standing investment in Monroe County.

While we take great pride in companies that have been with us for over a century, we also recognize our newest additions. With the support of COMIDA, the world's largest human resources company, Adecco, recently relocated its Eastern Shared Services Center to the Rochester Technology Park, creating 89 new jobs. Pleased with their new home and Monroe County's highly skilled workforce, Adecco also selected Monroe County for their new Recruiting Center of Excellence.

I am pleased to announce tonight that Adecco will lease and renovate an additional 13-thousand square feet at Rochester Technology Park, and create 140 new jobs for local residents. This Fortune Global 500 Company's continued commitment to Monroe County is a true testament to the strength and vitality of our local economy.

Addeco Executives Rebecca Valladares and Lori Hock are kind enough to join us this evening. I thank you and Addeco for choosing to build a future in our community.

But the State of the County isn't just about celebrating what we have. It's also about focusing on the future and how we can cultivate new jobs. We are committed to developing new innovative economic development programs to help build upon our record of success.

The 'Monroe Manufactures Jobs' program is a partnership with Monroe Community College that will help us better meet the increasing demands of our local manufacturing industry.

You might be surprised to hear that despite the economic downturn, there are manufacturing jobs available for our residents. In fact this industry, so much a part of our past, has great potential for growth in the future. Right now, Monroe County has about 1-thousand manufacturing companies that provide more than 50-thousand jobs to area residents.

And, for each new manufacturing job added, 2.7 separate service jobs are created.

At a time when many sectors are downsizing, local manufacturers are actually hiring. The Center for Integrated Manufacturing Studies at RIT recently found that there is an average of 4.7 positions available right now at local companies.

'Monroe Manufactures Jobs' connects students of MCC's Precision Machining, Optical Fabrication, and AAS Precision Machining programs with local manufacturing companies. Both the hiree and the employer receive a bonus if the employee works for the company for one full year.

The program links skilled workers with excellent jobs, and increases awareness among high school and college graduates about existing opportunities in manufacturing.

Tonight, I'm pleased to announce a brand new economic development initiative, Monroe County's 'Warriors to Work' program.

‘Warriors to Work’ is a partnership between Monroe County’s Veteran Services Agency and the Rochester Veterans Business Council. It’s a program designed to link our servicemen and women with the support and resources they need to establish and build a civilian career when returning home from their tour of duty.

The rate of unemployment for our returning veterans is twice the average than for non-veterans of the same age. That’s unacceptable. Using the ‘Warriors to Work’ program, veterans will work one-on-one with an advocate who will help connect them to an employer that is “currently hiring” and willing to give preference to veterans.

Our veterans deserve a chance to achieve prosperous careers. I don’t think there is any better way to truly thank those who have served our country than to ensure they receive the support and resources needed for a successful transition with they return home.

The private-sector’s support for ‘Warriors to Work’ has already been tremendous. To date, seven local companies have signed-on to participate in the program. They are: Hammer Packaging, Industrial Furnace, Simcona, Adecco, Sentry Safe, ConServe, and Klein Steel.

Representatives from each of these companies have joined us tonight, and I would like to ask all of them to stand and be recognized for giving back to those heroes who have given so much of themselves to protect our freedom.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Tom Cray, President and CEO of the Veterans Outreach Center, for his steadfast support of our veterans as well. Tom, please stand up and be recognized.

At a time when our unemployed neighbors are struggling, we as a government and a community have a responsibility to do everything we can to continue investing in valuable new technologies today to build a stronger and more prosperous economy for tomorrow.

Monroe JobLink is a new feature on our award-winning website [monroecounty.gov](http://monroecounty.gov).

It’s a search engine that uses a simplified, customer-friendly approach to connecting employers with job applicants from throughout our area. The program is part of a unique collaboration between the County and existing workforce assistance programs, including some offered through our partners at Rochester Works!

Joblink is also more than just a tool to find job opportunities. The site offers advice on where to find valuable educational resources, information on relocating to our region, and tips on how to effectively save for retirement.

Best of all, it’s free! All you have to do to get started is visit [monroecounty.gov](http://monroecounty.gov) and click on JobLink.

Would you like to work in government? Thanks to our Human Resources Department, you can now go on-line to get a Civil Service Exam application. We know this increased access will

benefit local government employers, including Monroe County, and will give us a broader reach by allowing us to draw from an even more talented, creative, and innovative workforce.

If you want to take a Civil Service exam for the County, any town, village, or suburban school district, you can now head to [monroecounty.gov](http://monroecounty.gov) 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Jobs for our youth are an important priority for a healthy future, but can be very hard to find. With 48-hundred people on staff, Monroe County is a major local employer. This year, for the first time, we are joining Rochester Works! and the Rochester-Monroe County Youth Bureau to provide summer internships to 40 young people. This will be an incredible opportunity for interns to gain valuable work experience during the summer months and complete a job readiness training session with a mock interview.

The program comes at no cost to county taxpayers but is a critical investment in developing the workforce of tomorrow.

The State of our County is only as strong as our ability to create jobs, support business expansion and growth, and connect our residents to jobs and opportunity. And, the State of our County is only as strong as its County government.

Property taxes in New York State are a staggering 79 percent above the national average. At every level of government we have a fundamental responsibility to make each taxpayer dollar count with operations that are smarter, more efficient and more effective. I am a firm believer that we can reduce costs for taxpayers while improving the quality of services.

We're doing that in Monroe County with Project Save. In 2007 I challenged our Department of Human Services to reduce welfare costs by reducing caseloads, while improving outcomes. Our Commissioner Kelly Reed and her team rallied. Project Save was created with an enhanced focus on moving individuals from public assistance to self-sufficiency. Caseloads dropped and DHS was able to absorb 22-million dollars worth of increased costs from State mandates. The department continues to reduce costs and improve outcomes for our children and families.

Counties all across this State are being asked to do more than ever before, with fewer resources than ever before. Public-private partnerships are critical to a strong State of the County.

We have many to be proud of. Hillside Work Scholarship, Encompass, Nurse Family Partnership, Building Healthy Children. All are programs that combine public dollars with private investment to help children and families succeed.

Now a new partnership is evolving to help our children in foster care. Our Department of Human Services, our Health Department, the University of Rochester, and the Society for Protection and Care of Children are joining forces on a new centralized location for the Starlight Pediatrics Clinic and the County's child visitation services.

Right now, services for foster children and their families are spread out all across the County. Our young people are forced to travel from place to place to receive the critical care that they

need. Bringing foster care services under one roof will create a much-needed sense of stability, and allow children to visit with their doctor, social workers, and parents in one safe, and secure environment.

This will yield better outcomes but also reduce costs for local taxpayers. Our Health Department has secured a 3.6-million dollar State grant to help build the new facility, which will become a model of efficiency for others to follow.

Last week I was proud to announce that New York State took action to restore Monroe County's full share of Child Care Block Grant Funding for the coming year – a move that allowed us to return our subsidized day care program eligibility threshold to 165 percent of the poverty level and restore child care subsidies for nearly 1-thousand children in our area. This new funding will help to provide low-income families with affordable day care options, while making it easier to find and maintain employment and continue down the path to financial independence.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Governor Paterson and the members of our State Assembly delegation, in particular Assemblyman David Gantt and Assemblywoman Susan John, for recognizing the immediate need to assist low-income working families by restoring funding to our subsidized day care program.

Sometimes promoting efficiency in government is as simple as taking a good, hard look at the integrity of existing programs. Counties were originally created by New York State to provide social services for individuals and families in need.

But all programs have weaknesses that open the door to waste, fraud and abuse. That costs all of us money and puts services at risk for those who truly need them.

Working with DHS and our Law Department, I've made a commitment to taxpayers to target the bad apples in the system.

The County Medicaid Demonstration Project is our flagship initiative. Monroe County was one of the first to sign onto the project, which is a partnership with the New York State Office of the Medicaid Inspector General, Salient Corporation, and The Bonadio Group. We're getting results, identifying and investigating questionable Medicaid activity in our community. Our team has examined the records of 36 Medicaid providers in this area and has found nearly 5-million dollars in overpayments, 5 cases of suspected fraud, and two cases of suspected fraud that have been deemed "serious."

Medicaid is the largest driver of high property taxes in this State. The growth of this program is not sustainable for taxpayers. Targeting waste, fraud and abuse makes sense for the Medicaid program and it makes sense for our welfare program as well.

Monroe County is now using Salient Corporation software to cross check historically affluent zip code areas with the addresses of those on public assistance. The goal? To ensure that taxpayers aren't picking up the tab for those who claim they need welfare but somehow have an ability to purchase lavish properties. This innovative program is already yielding results.

We are committed to targeting fraud, waste and abuse, and our partnership extends to the District Attorney's office for prosecution. Those who steal from our taxpayers will be held fully accountable.

Since 2004, I have honored my commitment to fiscal responsibility each and every year. I have said repeatedly that the only special interest that matters to me is the taxpayer, and this continues to be my guiding principle today.

As families struggle to tighten their belts and do more with less, Monroe County is working harder than ever to manage your tax dollars with responsibility and restraint. It gets harder and harder to control expenses without impacting the quality of service that our residents deserve. But it's our most important pledge to the people who live here.

Our 2009 budget is balanced. It controls spending, and most importantly, keeps County property taxes stable.

Governments on every level are struggling with the one-two punch of increased operating costs and less revenue to work with. For some, the answer is solving the problem on the backs of property owners.

As your County Executive, I understand that tax increases will devastate an Upstate economy already in crisis.

That's why, in Monroe County, a tax increase was never an option. Not for our hard working families, not for our senior citizens fighting to stay in their homes, not for the businesses so vital to our future success.

We found success the old fashioned way - controlling spending. In every budget I've presented to this community, our non-mandated spending has been below the rate of inflation. We've cut costs, introduced efficiencies, and identified priorities. We've made tough choices and effectively managed the dollars that we control. You can relate because you've done the same thing in your businesses and in your homes.

But dollars that we control continue to be a key issue in County government. A staggering 80 percent of Monroe County's spending for 2009 is controlled by Albany and Washington... places far away from our community.

County leaders are shackled by unfunded mandates. We have little ability to control our own fiscal destiny and to direct funding to programs that best serve our residents. We are told what we have to provide and we don't always receive full or even partial reimbursement.

Last fall I joined my counterparts in Erie and Onondaga Counties to create the Upstate Mandate Relief Commission and help identify opportunities for reform. It is already yielding results.

Governor David Paterson recently called for a study to evaluate the cost of mandates to local governments. This has long been a top priority for every County Executive in the State. I applaud



the Governor's commitment to mandate reform. It's very simple. Mandate relief equals lower property taxes. Governor Paterson - Monroe County is ready to help in any way we can.

It's about time taxpayers in Upstate New York have a chance to see the rainbow that follows the perfect storm of unaffordability.

Fortunately, we have received a budget boost from the federal stimulus package. Monroe County will use 66-million dollars in FMAP money to offset the impact of the Medicaid program over the next two years. We've told you that New York's Medicaid program is one of the largest in the country, but our federal reimbursement is one of the lowest. You, as county taxpayers, pick up 25 percent of the costs for Medicaid.

I had the honor of speaking personally with Vice-President Joe Biden only a few hours ago, who graciously updated me on the status of the stimulus effort and federal guidelines for the FMAP funds. We can't use the money to lower taxes or put it into a savings account, but we can balance the books, and in the end this will help protect taxpayers.

We know it's temporary funding, a one shot, and we will apply it responsibly to get the biggest bang for the buck. Thanks to the leadership and insistence of Senator Charles Schumer, counties in New York State received this funding directly.

This year federal stimulus dollars will also enhance our Department of Transportation's ability to maintain and improve road and highway infrastructure. More than 14-million dollars will be dedicated to road and bridge repairs from Honeoye Falls to Webster to Greece to Parma and all towns in between.

And almost one million dollars will be used to upgrade and paint bridges and improve signage throughout the County. These investments will help ensure that we have one of the most safe and efficient highway systems in the nation.

The State of the County depends on our ability to work together to find solutions to our problems. It's all about relationships. And it's all about a common interest. We all care about this community.

Patty Uttaro is a community leader and partner. As the new Director of the Rochester Central Library, she oversees the network of 20 independent libraries located all across Monroe County. We have one of the best library systems in the country, and with more than 30 years of experience in her library career, I am confident Patty Uttaro will take our system to the next level. Let's all give Patty a round of applause.

Monroe County has a proud tradition as the government sponsor for Monroe Community College. MCC is an integral part of our ability to train the workforce of the future and has earned a national reputation for excellence. We now have a new President at MCC. Dr. Anne Kress is the 5<sup>th</sup> President and the first woman to lead the college. I've already told her that as the 5<sup>th</sup> County Executive and the first woman to lead our community, I am looking forward to helping her achieve her vision for MCC. Please join me in welcoming Dr. Anne Kress.

I would also be remiss if I didn't publicly thank Dr. Larry Tyree, who stepped in as Interim President at a critical time in MCC's history. Dr Tyree, thank you for being such a good caretaker for our college during the past year. You have contributed so much in such a short time and, on behalf of a grateful community, I thank you.

I started tonight talking about history and how it shaped the University of Rochester.

But this year we are also reminded of a time in history when the City of Rochester became the County seat of Monroe.

Tonight let's say happy 175<sup>th</sup> birthday to the City of Rochester. This remarkable milestone speaks to the spirit and perseverance of the City's great people. Monroe County has a birthday gift for the City but unfortunately, because of the need for advance planning, it has become the worst kept secret around. On May 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>, we will bring the ESL International Air Show from the Greater Rochester International Airport to the shores of Lake Ontario at Ontario Beach Park. We hope that City residents and visitors alike will enjoy the backdrop of blue sky, and blue surf, for the incredible aerial performances of the Canadian Snowbirds.

Monroe County has a rich history and tonight we have another birthday to celebrate. The Town of Riga is marking its bicentennial year. Congratulations to Town Supervisor Ken Kuter and all of the citizens of this great west side town.

Monroe County is one community with 19 towns and 10 villages, and this year we will pay tribute to our municipalities by establishing a "Hall of Towns and Villages" in the County Office Building on Main Street. Working through our Council of Governments, we will ask each Supervisor and Mayor for a copy of their incorporation papers. Those papers will be displayed along with a replica of each municipal seal and a brief history of each community.

I know we have a number of Supervisors with us tonight. Please stand and be recognized. I thank you all for your partnership and your service to our community.

With more shared service agreements than any other county in the State, there is no question that working together, government to government, is the rule rather than the exception.

The State of the County is only as strong as our commitment to sustainability.

Last year we talked extensively about green initiatives and leading by example with an aggressive green strategy. Building on our spirit of partnership and our aim to support local companies, last year we launched the "Refill Not Landfill" campaign.

All residents are being encouraged to use a refillable 'Nalgene' water bottle. And instead of going to the store for your water, all you have to do is turn on the faucet for a clean, safe water product. You'll be saving money but also minimizing the number of plastic water bottles that wind up in our landfill. And you'll be supporting 1-thousand Thermo Fisher Scientific employees who live and work right here in our community.

Tonight Fernando Galiana, Nalgene Product Manager for Thermo Fisher Scientific, is with us. Fernando, thank you for your partnership. “Refill Not Landfill” has now become a national model.

Later this year at the Greater Rochester International Airport, look up and you’ll see more than planes in the sky.

Thanks to the partnership of our Monroe County Legislature, we will be installing two dozen wind turbines and 50-thousand square feet of solar paneling on the roof of the terminal.

180-thousand kilowatt hours of energy will be produced. No County tax dollars will be used for the project, but our community will benefit from reduced energy costs at this public facility.

We are truly fortunate in Monroe County to have some of the most impressive natural resources in the country. Our community is rich with parkland, farmland and waterways.

If you haven’t visited the Lamberton Conservatory recently you will be surprised at what you see. Our Departments of Environmental Services and Parks recently finished a total restoration of the Conservatory’s historic glass dome. The result is an exact replication of the original structure. The project won the American Public Works Association Award for historic preservation. Congratulations to DES Director Mike Garland, Parks Director Larry Staub, and your respective teams for preserving this landmark treasure for generations to come.

The State of any County is only as strong as its ability to keep citizens safe. Public safety is one of government’s most important responsibilities. That means investing in resources so our law enforcement and public safety professionals are the best equipped and the best trained to do their jobs.

I am extremely proud of the professionalism and dedication of our men and women in the Monroe County Sheriff’s Office and on the Monroe County public safety team. Thanks to the leadership of folks like Sheriff Patrick O’Flynn and our Public Safety Director Steve Bowman, this community is a national model for public safety cooperation and collaboration.

The Monroe County Mobile Communications Unit is a unique initiative. This vehicle is equipped with state-of-the-art technology that allows all police agencies and our State and Federal partners to communicate directly with one another during an emergency.

As we learned during the September 11<sup>th</sup> tragedy, interoperability is critical when split-second decision making is needed and information dissemination must take place in minutes rather than hours.

While we hope it is rarely needed to be put into action, the Mobile Communications Unit makes that sort of invaluable, immediate response a reality in our community.

This year we're taking our commitment to public safety to a new level, into the crime lab. Our police officers put their lives on the line every time they walk out the door. Fighting crime effectively means making arrests in the neighborhoods and pursuing criminal conviction in the courtroom. Successful prosecution depends on the proper collection and analysis of evidence. We have an amazing team in our County crime lab. For years they've done an incredible job despite working in a 40 year old, antiquated facility.

This fall, Monroe County will give CSI a run for its money. Construction is expected to begin in October on our new high-tech crime lab. The new lab will provide much-needed additional space and give our staff the state-of-the-art tools they need to process evidence efficiently and effectively. Our lab serves 9 counties and is the only regional crime lab in Upstate New York. Thanks to our State and Congressional partners and the City of Rochester, our staff will be moving into their new home in 2011.

Public safety also means protecting the public's health. Our public health response plans were recently put to the test in a real life scenario. The H1N1 virus or swine flu threat recently hit home.

Although the pandemic did not cause serious problems for us here in Monroe County, it did usher in a sense of urgency and prompted our team to put plan into practice. Tonight I would like to acknowledge and thank Steve Bowman, Monroe County Director of Public Safety, Muffy Meisenzahl, Monroe County Emergency Management Administrator, and Dr. Andrew Doniger, Monroe County Public Health Director, and their staffs for working around the clock to keep our community safe and informed.

We don't know if, or when, this virus will return. Rest assured that if it does, we stand prepared, thanks to our dedicated team of public health and safety experts.

I've had the great honor of serving this County in different government capacities since 1996. When I first took office a wise friend issued a warning. If you try to please everyone - if you try to be all things to all people - you will fail.

Decision-making isn't about pleasing everyone. I believe the State of this County will only be strong if we are willing to take some risks.

And as County Executive I have never been content with the path of least resistance, especially if I truly believe the road less traveled will yield great results for the residents of this County.

Every project throughout this community's great history has had its detractors. Opponents lined up against the development of the original Midtown Plaza, against the War Memorial, against the Convention Center, against Silver Stadium and more recently against Frontier Field. Even George Eastman stood firm in spite of aggressive naysayers when Kodak Park was built.

Change doesn't come easy, but over the course of time, Monroe County's leaders have recognized the importance of development in reinforcing our quality of life. They weren't

sidetracked by vocal critics. They focused on the investment needed to move our community to the next level.

That's why today, in 2009, I stand firm in support of Renaissance Square.

Renaissance Square is a job creator.

Renaissance Square will bring revenue, people and opportunity to our Center City.

Using arts, education and transportation, Renaissance Square is a critical part of the larger rebuilding strategy that will define the future of Downtown Rochester.

Since the beginning there are many who have tried to make this project about me, a Republican County Executive proposing a project in a Democrat controlled city. It's not about me and it's not a competition between elected leaders.

It's about 37-hundred construction workers who need jobs now.

It's about the 50-thousand people who ride buses each day and deserve a comfortable environment versus standing in the heat and cold on Main Street.

It's about the hundreds of thousands of people who, every year, turn out to support Broadway Theatre.

And when they do, it's about the restaurants and businesses that see real financial benefit.

It's about the thousands of conventioners who choose not to come to Rochester because we don't have the infrastructure to support them.

It's about the 42-hundred students and faculty who deserve, and demand, a state of the art learning environment downtown for MCC.

Those are the people who care about Renaissance Square. Those are our allies.

Tonight I challenge even our harshest critics to put the future of our people above the politics of the past. Tonight I challenge even our harshest critics to get on board or get out of the way. Within months there will be cranes in the air. And there will be people put to work.

I don't pretend to have all the answers. But I do know that other areas of the State are thriving because leaders have stood shoulder to shoulder on community priorities.

Rochester and Monroe County have historically struggled with consensus... and oftentimes have settled for status quo instead of progress.

We have an opportunity to change that dynamic. Let's start with a commitment to Renaissance Square.

It was Patrick Henry who proclaimed, “United we stand, divided we fall. Let us not split into factions which must destroy that union upon which our existence hangs.”

The State of our County will only be strong if we heed those words as advice and warning.

We are the caretakers of our history, but must also be good stewards of our future.

We are one community. And when we stand united, Susan B. Anthony was right...failure is impossible.

God bless you all and God bless Monroe County. Good night.

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